Corvino Supper Club and Tasting Room Opens in Kansas City

Angela Bond

Black cod with sea urchin, chanterelle and chicharron.
Chef Michael Corvino and his wife, Christina, reached a milestone when they officially opened Corvino Supper Club and Tasting Room last weekend. The 5,320-square-foot restaurant combines a 74-seat main dining room and 16-seat bar, a private “jewel box” Tasting Room and a club stage for live music performances. Based on the first floor of Corrigan Station in the Crossroads Arts District, the sleek supper club drew a lively crowd of diners, fellow chefs, friends and well-wishers.

The mantle of restaurant ownership is new for the Corvinos. Chef Corvino has opened and worked in a range of restaurants, including Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek in Dallas, Texas, and Urban Farmer, a steakhouse in Portland, Oregon. In mid-2013, he came to Kansas City and became the latest and last executive chef at The American Restaurant, Kansas City’s highly regarded dining venue, before it closed its doors last December. Michael planned his departure in advance of the restaurant’s closure with distinct plans for the future.

“It’s been eight months since I left The American Restaurant. I started the business plan for the supper club two years ago,” says Michael. “I knew what I wanted to do: a social dining experience with shared plates.”

Other than working as a waitress in college, the supper club is Christina’s only venture into the restaurant profession. Creating a restaurant together was rewarding for the couple.

“Michael and I are both cut from the same cloth. We come from families who have very strong work ethics,” says Christina. “We started writing our business plan before we were even engaged. We’re passionate about working hard and playing hard, so doing it side-by-side was very natural. We have completely different skill sets so they dovetail rather than compete.”

At the supper club, Christina is responsible for the “high touch hospitality, private dining sales and events, public relations, marketing and the music program.”

Design-build architectural firm Hufft designed the boxy modern space that’s cool and constrained, physically defined by massive concrete columns and soaring 16-foot ceilings. “Michael and I worked very hand-in-hand on the design and feel,” Christina says. “He loves the masculinity of the gray and black palette; I added in the softness with florals, accessories, and fabrics.”
Artist Jeremy Collins painted the signature raven and feathers – “corvino” means raven – that take flight along the supper club’s walls like a totem and add dramatic flair.

The food and service at Corvino Supper Club represents a break from what the executive chef accomplished at The American. There, Michael introduced progressive tasting menus and service to a legendary space known for and ensconced in a traditional approach to a la carte fine dining. In step with contemporary dining trends, the supper club offers dishes and portions that encourage guests to share, interact and explore.

“I did food at The American that was me. I played with components and ingredients there, but only two dishes appear here on the opening menu,” Michael says.

Michael’s supper club menu includes a bigger, more progressive version of steak tartare that includes optional caviar. The wagyu ribeye, served with wasabi and dark, rich huitlacoche-based sauce, is the chef’s inventive riff on steak with horseradish and steak sauce.

The menu is designed around shareable seasonal dishes such as crab fried rice, chicken liver mousse and fried chicken served with butter lettuce for wrapping, pickled radishes and chili sauce. The price points are approachable, starting with small dishes at $8 to 10 up to large-format dishes, such as black cod and ultra-tender wagyu steak, in the $45 to 65 range.

Warm lights and vibrant music emanate from the stage nightly during evening sets. “Christina and I teamed up on the music. It’s something she enjoys and is passionate about,” Michael says. “It was her idea to put music in the lounge at The American. That’s where I met [singer] Shay Estes and musicians like Mark Lowrey and Jeff Harshbarger. Live music was a success story at The American. Here, we wanted people to eat, drink and socialize with friends and live music.”

The music jumps genres from honeyed soul by Julia Haile to country-tinged ballads by singer Lauren Krum to jazz and Cuban sounds. “Music at the supper club speaks to Kansas City and its jazz history in a contemporary way, but we’ll never be a jazz club,” Michael says. “I could cook food and do a cool space anywhere. I wanted to do something that spoke to Kansas City.”
The Corvinos faced myriad tasks and decisions involved with designing and constructing a restaurant from scratch on a timeline and budget, but valued the learning experience.

“I have an appreciation for any owner of any business and how they got there,” says Michael. “Great friends like Colby and Megan Garrelts [of Bluestem and Rye] and Howard Hanna and Caitlin Corcoran [of The Rieger and Ça Va] have been an unbelievable resource and support system. It was cool to see them dine here and say, ‘Welcome to the club.’ It’s an emotional process. Now I look at others who take the leap to restaurant ownership with admiration.”

“Neither Michael nor myself are from KC. We were very close to heading back to the west, which is closer to home for both of us, but after trips and lots of thought, we just couldn’t leave,” adds Christina. “This community is so wonderful, and we were blown away by the support in our first week. We can’t imagine this magic happening anywhere else.”

Corvino Supper Club & Tasting Room, 1828 Walnut St., Crossroads Arts District, Kansas City, Missouri, corvino.com

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